

## THIS PRESENT AGE – PART B

This morning I want to talk about the term “**ages**” just to validate that God has worked in history in different “**ages**”. In each “**age**”, how God worked was very different from a previous age, as well as the future “**ages**” which were to come. Now, without belaboring the point, it should be very obvious that God has divided history into various time periods. Just the fact that we have the Old Testament and the New Testament, and that we have an old covenant and a “**new covenant**” bears witness to the reality of different time periods in the outworking of God’s eternal plan. For instance, [Hebrews 8:13](#) says,

**Heb 8:13 (NKJV) In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.**

The fact that in the local church that we do not offer sacrifices for sin attests to this fact. So, without going into a lengthy discussion on this, the theological term for these epochs and eras in which God has worked in distinctive ways is called “**dispensations**”. A dispensation is a distinct period of time in which God deals with man in a certain way particular to that time period. Those time periods are also called “**ages**”, and each age has distinctive characteristics that make it uniquely different from the previous ages or future ages to come. The actual term that we have been addressing, “**this present age**”, is only used twice in Scripture. The first is in [1 Timothy 6:17](#) which says,

**1Ti 6:17 (NKJV) Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.**

The second is in [Titus 2:11-12](#) which says,

**Tit 2:11 (NKJV) For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,<sup>12</sup> teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,**

Now, the point is very simple – it is to see that we are living in what Scripture defines as “**this present age**”, and that this “**present age**” is distinct from previous “**ages**” or “**ages**” which are to come. For instance, the seven years of Tribulation are a distinct age to come where God will deal with man in a way that is different than how He is dealing with them now. We live in the age of grace where God gives what we call “common grace” to all men, even those who live in total unbelief. He sends His rain on the just and the unjust alike. In the Tribulation, the grace of God may be present in that some people will be saved, but the overriding characteristic of that time period is judgment and wrath for unbelief. The millennial kingdom of 1000 years is a distinct age to come. The eternal state is a distinct age to come in which there will be no sin and no sinners. So, in each of these epochs of time, God will work differently than He is working now. It is not that God is different, but that He will work differently. It would be no different than how you treated your toddler versus how you treat them as an adult. You are the same person with the same principles, but you choose to deal differently with each ensuing age. You may spank your 3 year old child, but you would never spank your 40 year old child.

So, each “**age**” or “**dispensation**” carries with it a particular stewardship, a distinct way that God **administrates** and **governs** that “age”. For instance, and these are very simple illustrations to make the point, in the Old Testament God worked through Israel as His redemptive channel. In the New Testament, the redemptive channel is the church, and Israel has been scattered throughout the entire earth

and is almost invisible to what God is doing. In the millennial kingdom, Christ governs and rules (something He did not do in the New Testament). Then in the eternal state with “**the new heavens and the new earth**”, God the Father will be all in all. We cannot deny the distinctions.

So, when we talk about “**this present age**”, we are only dealing with one specific time frame, one distinct period of time in the overall outworkings of God – and it will come to an end. The word for “**age**” is the Greek word “*aion*”. Dr. Vine defines the word “**age**” as “*an era that signifies a period of indefinite duration, or time viewed in relation to what takes place in the period. The force attaching to the word is not so much that of the actual length of a period, but that of a period marked by spiritual or moral characteristics.*” What Dr. Vine is saying is that each period has distinct moral and spiritual characteristics to it. For instance, we would never stone someone for working on a Sunday or picking up wood to heat their house on a Sunday, but in the Old Testament, that was the law. We would never sacrifice animals on an altar, but in the Old Testament that was an everyday occurrence at the temple. In the Old Testament, if a woman was caught in adultery, she was to be stoned. We in the church age would never do that today. So, that period of time had very distinct spiritual and moral characteristics to it that are different from those of the church age in which we live. We know, for instance, that in the future age to come that God will deal differently with the church than He will with Israel. The church will be raptured and Israel will be left behind. Both will receive God’s blessings, but they will be given to them in different ways and at different times. They are two distinct entities in the overall outworking of God’s purposes in the earth, and He will deal with them in distinct and different ways.

In the New Testament, whenever the words “**this present age**” are used, they are always referring to the that specific “**age**” in which the writer lived, or the church age which is still ongoing. In reference to the church age, it refers to that time period from the day of Pentecost to the rapture of the church. Now, I want us to appreciate that in the New Testament that the phrase “**this present age**” and associated terms like “**this age**” do not necessarily have a good connotation to them. For instance, [Galatians 1:4](#) calls it “**this present evil age**”. The reason is that this particular age, as well as previous ages, are marked by the work of what Scripture calls “**the god of this age**” in [2 Corinthians 4:4](#). [Ephesians 6:12](#) calls it a time of “**spiritual darkness**” when it says,

**Eph 6:12 (NKJV) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.**

The ultimate by-product of this “**age**” in which we live is one that eventually is willing to completely reject God and fully embrace the antichrist. The word “**evil**” in [Galatians 1:4](#) is the Greek word “*poneros*”, and it specifically refers to that which is hurtful and is deemed evil in its effect and influence. It is an evil that corrupts people morally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The root word from which it is derived is “*ponos*” which refers specifically to that which creates sorrow and pain. We would say that this “**evil**” is wicked and malicious in its effect on people’s lives. The Bible states over and over that there are “**evil men**” that are at work in this church age. [2 Timothy 3:13](#) says,

**2Ti 3:13 (NKJV) But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.**

So, one of the prevailing characteristics of this particular age is that it is wicked, corrupt and hurtful.

Now, I want us to be clear that there are these different “ages” that are clearly identified in the Scriptures. There are those that occurred in the past, the one that we are currently living in called the “church age”, and several future ages that we have identified as the Tribulation, the Millennium, and the Eternal State. I stated it earlier, but what is important about all of this is the simple fact that in each of these “ages” that God will work differently. That is very critical to understand. Life as we currently know it is coming to an abrupt end. That is important simply because there are some people who think that God will always work the same way. They believe that He will continue to work in the future in the same way as He is working now – but that is not the case at all. So, I want to at least take a look at how the word “age” or “ages” is used in the Bible by just looking at various passages. For instance, [1 Corinthians 2:6-8](#) says,

**1Co 2:6 (NKJV) However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. <sup>7</sup> But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God ordained before the ages for our glory, <sup>8</sup> which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.**

Obviously, Paul is talking in these verses about “**this present age**” – what he calls “**this age**”, or the one in which he is living which is the church age. Then he further reiterates the fact that there are distinct periods of time in which God is working by stating that God ordained certain “**hidden**” things to happen “**before the ages**”, or before any of the various and different ages even began. [Ephesians 2:4-7](#) says,

**Eph 2:4 (NKJV) But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup> and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.**

So, in v7, Paul understood that there would be future ages, or “ages to come”. [Ephesians 3:1-5](#) says,

**Eph 3:1 (NKJV) For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles-- <sup>2</sup> if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, <sup>3</sup> how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, <sup>4</sup> by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), <sup>5</sup> which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:**

So, here Paul is talking about previous ages – or “**other ages**” which have already taken place. So, he has talked about “**before the ages**”, “**this age**”, “**the ages to come**”, and “**other ages**” (or past ages which have already taken place). In [Colossians 1:26](#) he speaks about this hidden mystery concerning the church that has now been revealed when he says,

**Col 1:26 (NKJV) the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.**

All of what we are studying about these various ages is really leading up to [Matthew 13](#) which is really a very pivotal chapter that we will study relative to “**this present evil age**” in which we live. For

instance, in [Matthew 13:38-40](#), interpreting the parable of the soils, Jesus says this relative to the term “ages”,

**Mt 13:38 (NKJV) The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked *one*.<sup>39</sup> The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.<sup>40</sup> Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age.**

At the end of what age? At the end of the church age. Much of this will happen at the rapture when the church is removed, and the goats and the tares which were in the church but were unbelieving, will be “gathered and burned in fire”. It appears that this primarily happens at the end of the Tribulation which addresses this in [Matthew 25:30-46](#). Let me read two verses to you – [v41 and 46](#), which speak about Christ judging the lost when He returns.

**Mt 25:41 (NKJV) Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:**

**Mt 25:46 (NKJV) And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."**

This is the separation of the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the tares for those who have been left behind at the rapture. In [Matthew 13:47-50](#), speaking about the parable of the dragnet, Jesus explains,

**Mt 13:47 (NKJV) "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind,<sup>48</sup> which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away.<sup>49</sup> So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just,<sup>50</sup> and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."**

This is almost identical language to what Jesus said in [Matthew 25](#), but here He calls them “the wicked from among the just”. In [Matthew 24:3](#), Jesus’ disciples asked Him this question which was the reason for his two chapter discourse on the end times,

**Mt 24:3 (NKJV) Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"**

In [Mark 10:29-31](#), Jesus made this statement concerning a future age,

**Mk 10:29 (NKJV) So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's,<sup>30</sup> who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life.<sup>31</sup> But many *who are* first will be last, and the last first."**

[2 Corinthians 4:3-4](#) speaks about the work of Satan in this current age in which we live,

**2Co 4:3 (NKJV) But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,<sup>4</sup> whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.**

**Ephesians 1:21** contrasts the current age and the future age,

**Eph 1:21 (NKJV) far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that (age) which is to come.**

**Ephesians 6:12** says,

**Eph 6:12 (NKJV) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.**

So, it is critical that the true church of the last days recognize all that is transpiring during this current age so that it will not become the apostate church. Men are evil, the devil is evil, and the times become more and more evil as we approach the rapture and the Second Coming. The stark reality is that within the church there is a widespread departure from biblical faith and biblical teaching. That is why **Jude 3-4** says,

**Jude 1:3 (NKJV) Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.<sup>4</sup> For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.**

The word “**faith**” as used in this context is talking about that body of truth that God has given to us, all of the doctrines upon which our personal faith in Christ is actually built.

So many people are completely forsaking biblical doctrine that saves and purifies for self-pleasing and carnal doctrines that eventually destroy people’s lives. Many in the younger generation are abandoning godly virtues and truth for a damning philosophy of life where they become the center of everything. God has been systematically removed from the culture in which they live and replaced with a very humanistic worldview rather than a godly worldview. **How we think always determines how we live**.

The modern church age in America has been overtaken by worldliness, and the lives of those within the American church are often indistinguishable from the lives of the lost. It should be evident that there are many in the church that are not actually a part of the true church, even though they think that they are. Nothing will be more tragic for someone than to have not only fooled everyone else, but to also have fooled themselves about their salvation. Many men and women and young people in the Laodicean church today are deliberately and knowingly turning away from Christ, from the truth, and from the church. They are more than at ease and satisfied with not being serious about their relationship to Christ. May God help each of us to have the will and the discernment to be sure about the most important decision that we will ever make and that is that we have come to Christ in genuine faith and repentance and have forsaken all of those things that dishonor His name. We must do so within the context of “**this present evil age**” which is always bent on drawing every single one of us away from a real and vibrant faith in Christ.